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SIPDIS
TELEGRAM

July 15, 2003

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 3265 - UNKNOWN)
TAGS: OIIP, KMDR
Captions: None
Subject: SHAYKH AL-KUBAYSI "MODERATES" TONE WITH LOCAL ARAB MEDIA
Ref: None

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 03265

SIPDIS
CXABU:
ACTION: PAO
INFO: ECON POL AMB DCM
Laser1:
ACTION: PAO

DISSEMINATION: PAO
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:MMWAHBA
DRAFTED: PAO:AHOSHAN
CLEARED: A/DCM:KVANDEVATE; ECON:OJOHN; PAO:TPONCE

VZCZCADI127
OO RUEHC RUENAAA RUEKJCS RHMFIUU RUCNRAQ
DE RUEHAD #3265/01 1961244
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 151244Z JUL 03
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0835
RUENAAA/SECNAV WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHMFIUU/HQ COALITION PROVISIONAL AUTH BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 003265

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/NGA; NEA/PPD, NEA/RA,
INR/R/MR, PA, INR/NESA, INR/B AND IIP/G/NEA-SA
WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA

REF: A. KUWAIT 1482; B. ABU DHABI 1461; C. ABU DHABI 2013; D. ABU DHABI 2654

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: SHAYKH AL-KUBAYSI "MODERATES" TONE WITH LOCAL ARAB MEDIA

11. SUMMARY AND COMMENT: ON JULY 3-4, ABU DHABI'S ARABIC LANGUAGE DAILY "AL ITTIHAD" PUBLISHED A TWO-PART INTERVIEW WITH ISLAMIC MUFTI DR. AHMAD AL-KUBAYSI. PER REFTELS, AL-KUBAYSI HAD CRITICIZED THE U.S.-LED WAR AND AUTHORITY IN IRAQ SEVERELY DURING PREVIOUS PUBLIC

APPEARANCES. MOST NOTABLE WAS HIS APRIL 18TH FRIDAY SERMON AT BAGHDAD'S ABU HANIFA AL-NO'MAN MOSQUE FOLLOWING THE FALL OF SADDAM'S REGIME, A SERMON IN WHICH AL-KUBAYSI ENCOURAGED WORSHIPPERS TO RESIST THE AMERICAN "OCCUPATION" OF IRAQ AND DEMONSTRATE.

12. IN THIS INTERVIEW, UNLIKE HIS EARLIER RHETORIC, AL-KUBAYSI COUNSELED IRAQIS TO "GIVE THE AMERICANS A CHANCE" TO "ESTABLISH A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT AND REBUILD IRAQ." KUBAYSI ASSERTED THAT ANY IRAQI GOVERNMENT MUST BE SECULAR IN NATURE AND THE "SUBJECT OF A PUBLIC REFERENDUM SO THAT IRAQIS CAN DECIDE THEIR FUTURE." WHILE STILL CRITICAL OF U.S. MOTIVES FOR IRAQ, THE INTERVIEW IS A WELCOME SHIFT FOR THIS PROMINENT YET FIERY RELIGIOUS LEADER, AN INDIVIDUAL MANY BELIEVE HAS THE ABILITY TO SHAPE LOCAL AND REGIONAL VIEWS ON THE EMERGING IRAQ. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

HAPPY TO BE BACK IN IRAQ

13. ON JULY 3 AND 4, ABU DHABI-BASED SEMI-OFFICIAL ARABIC DAILY "AL-ITTIHAD" RAN AN INTERVIEW IN TWO PARTS, FULL-PAGE EACH DAY, WITH PROMINENT ISLAMIC MUFTI DR. AHMAD AL-KUBAYSI. IN SHARP CONTRAST TO PREVIOUS STATEMENTS (SEE REFTELS), AL-KUBAYSI, WHO HAS BASED HIMSELF IN THE UAE FOR SEVERAL YEARS, URGED IRAQIS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE REBUILDING PROCESS. CLAIMING HE HAS "NO POLITICAL AMBITIONS," HE EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE TO RESUME A ROLE IN THE RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP OF IRAQ, TO WHICH HE HAD NOT RETURNED SINCE A 1997 DISPUTE WITH UDAY HUSSEIN LEFT HIM WANTED "DEAD OR ALIVE."

ANGRY AND OCCUPIED BUT PATIENCE COUNSELED

14. ON JULY 3, AL-KUBAYSI EXPLAINED HIS HARSH ANTI-AMERICAN SERMON OF APRIL 18TH AT BAGHDAD'S ABU HANIFA AL-NO'MAN MOSQUE: "I WAS EXTREMELY INFLUENCED BY WHAT I SAW .. THERE WAS SYSTEMATIC DESTRUCTION, OUR TREASURES WERE ROBBED, AND OUR SECURITY WAS LOST. WHAT WOULD SOMEONE LIKE ME DO AFTER MANY YEARS AWAY FROM IRAQ?" DESPITE THESE EMOTIONS," AL-KUBAYSI RECOUNTED THAT "EVERYONE WANTED TO RESIST ... BUT WE WERE PERSUADED THAT WE HAD LOST AND WERE NOW OCCUPIED. THE AMERICANS ARE THE MASTERS AND WE ARE THE SLAVES ... WE AGREED THAT WHAT WE LOST IN THE WAR WE NEED TO REGAIN THROUGH PEACE AND WE SHOULD GIVE THE AMERICANS A CHANCE TO DO AS THEY PROMISED ... WE DECIDED TO WAIT UNTIL THEY ESTABLISHED A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT AND REBUILD IRAQ DESPITE THEIR AMBITIONS ON OUR OIL ..." HOWEVER, AL-KUBAYSI ASSERTED THAT THE AMERICANS COULD DO MORE NOW TO IMPROVE THEIR IMAGE AMONG IRAQIS: "THE AMERICANS HUMILIATE PEOPLE WHEN THEY ARREST THEM, AND THESE PEOPLE ARE UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, TRIBAL LEADERS AND RELIGIOUS ULAMAS."

STRONG SECULAR GOVERNMENT OF ALL GROUPS BEST FOR IRAQ

15. ON JULY 4, AL-KUBAYSI SUPPORTED CREATING A GOVERNMENT WITH STRONG INSTITUTIONS REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL IRAQIS: "DEMANDING AN ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT IN IRAQ IS IMPOSSIBLE, BECAUSE RELIGION IS THE LAST UMBRELLA THAT WILL BRING IRAQIS TOGETHER. I AM NOT FOR A SECULAR OR ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT. I WANT AN IRAQI GOVERNMENT WITH STRONG INSTITUTIONS THAT IS BACKED BY ALL OF ITS PEOPLE, MUSLIMS, CHRISTIANS, SHI'AS, AND SUNNIS. AFTER, THEN WE ASK THE IRAQIS WHAT THEY WANT. WE HAVE TO BE REALISTIC ... IRAQ CONTAINS VARIOUS SECTS AND ETHNIC GROUPS."

SUPPORTIVE OF RETURN OF CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY

¶6. AT THE SAME TIME, AL-KUBAYSI VOICED SUPPORT FOR THE RETURN OF A CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY, CLAIMING THAT "THERE IS A STRONG TENDENCY OF IRAQIS TO WELCOME THE RETURN OF A CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY, IT BEING THE MOST QUALIFIED SYSTEM TO MAINTAIN IRAQI UNITY ... OUR ONLY TIME OF PROSPERITY WAS DURING THE MONARCHY. THE CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY WAS VERY SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE THE KING DID NOT RULE, AND THE GOVERNMENT USED TO BE CHAIRED BY THE SHI'ITES, KURDS, AND SUNNIS WITHOUT ANY COMPLICATIONS OR COUPS. I SUPPORT THE REESTABLISHMENT OF THE MONARCHY, FOR IT WOULD PREVENT ANY SECTARIAN SPLIT IN IRAQ." AL-KUBAYSI ALSO SPECULATED THAT "THE FAMILIES LIKELY TO REGAIN THE IRAQI THRONE ARE THE HASHEMITES, THE SHAMMAR TRIBE, AND THE JILANI FAMILY" BUT NOTED THAT ANY GOVERNMENT AND ITS LEADERS MUST "BE THE SUBJECT OF A PUBLIC REFERENDUM SO THAT IRAQIS CAN DECIDE THEIR FUTURE AND HAVE THEIR SAY IN A FREE AND DEMOCRATIC WAY."

¶7. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

WAHBA